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SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/CT (RHONDA SHORE AND ED SALAZAR)
STATE PASS TO NCTC

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [COUNTERTERRORISM](#) [GOI](#) [INTERNAL](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#) [ISRAELI](#) [PALESTINIAN](#) [AFFAIRS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL: 2005 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 193439

¶1. In response to reftel, Embassy Tel Aviv submits the following proposed draft for the Israel section of the 2005 Country Reports on Terrorism. This draft has been cleared with ConGen Jerusalem, which is producing a report on the Palestinian Authority (septel).

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

¶2. The terrorism landscape in Israel changed significantly in 2005 for three reasons:

¶A. THE TAHDIYA -- In February 2005, HAMAS, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade agreed to a "Tahdiya" (calm, or truce) brokered by the Palestinian Authority (PA) with help from Cairo. The Tahdiya has not been uniformly accepted by Palestinian militant groups, and its observance has been intermittent even among those which have accepted it. But to the extent that HAMAS, the largest group, has generally upheld the Tahdiya, it has resulted in a significant reduction in terrorist activity in Israel.

¶B. DISENGAGEMENT -- From August 15--22, Israel withdrew approximately 8,000 settlers and the IDF units protecting them from the Gaza Strip and four northern West Bank settlements, fulfilling Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement plan, and turning over responsibility for the Gaza Strip to the PA. Before and during the withdrawal, IDF and PA Security Forces (PASF) coordinated some aspects of the evacuation and PASF deployments. IDF officials favorably assessed the coordination on the ground, even though Palestinian militants opened fire on IDF positions and Israeli communities numerous times with small arms, Qassam rockets and mortar shells.

¶C. EGYPT'S DEPLOYMENT ALONG THE GAZA-EGYPT BORDER -- As follow-up to disengagement, Egypt deployed 750 border guard forces along the Egypt-Gaza border following the IDF's withdrawal from that border on September 15. Egypt also dispatched a force of security advisers to the Gaza Strip to advise the PASF in carrying out its new security role along the border. IDF sources report that since the withdrawal from Gaza, there has been an increase in the number of explosive devices planted by terrorists along the security fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel. Incidents of small arms and rocket fire, mortar and Qassam launches, and clashes with terrorists planting explosives along the security fence continued after the Egyptian deployment.

¶3. ISRAEL'S MAJOR CT EFFORTS, INCLUDING STEPS TAKEN IN INTERNATIONAL FORA: Israel maintained staunch support for US-led counterterrorism efforts in 2005. After the November 9 al-Qaida bombings in Amman, Prime Minister Sharon declared Israel's preparedness to render immediate assistance to Jordan. At the UN and in other public fora, Prime Minister Sharon and other GOI officials repeatedly called on the PA to dismantle terrorist groups as a necessary step in implementing President Bush's roadmap for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

¶4. THE RESPONSE OF ISRAEL'S JUDICIAL SYSTEM RELATING TO TERRORISM AFFECTING U.S. CITIZENS OR FACILITIES THAT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON U.S. CT EFFORTS, INCLUDING RESPONSES TO EXTRADITION REQUESTS: Israel's judicial system has not taken any action related to terrorism that notably affects US citizens or facilities and/or has a significant impact on US counterterrorism (CT) efforts. No terrorism-related extradition requests were submitted by the US to Israel in 2005.

¶5. SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: Israel does not support international terrorism.

SANCTUARY (SAFE HAVENS) ASSESSMENT

¶6. THE EXTENT OF KNOWLEDGE BY THE GOI WITH RESPECT TO TERRORIST ACTIVITIES ON THE TERRITORY OF ISRAEL; AND ISRAEL'S ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE TERRORISTS, COOPERATE WITH U.S. CT

EFFORTS, AND PREVENT THE PROLIFERATION AND TRAFFICKING OF WMD
THROUGH ISRAEL:

1A. In 2005, Israel employed a variety of military operations in its counterterrorism efforts. IDF and security forces launched frequent arrest and apprehension raids throughout the West Bank and Gaza, conducted targeted killings of suspected Palestinian terrorists, imposed strict and widespread closures and curfews in Palestinian areas, conducted airborne rocket attacks on buildings affiliated with Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) in the Gaza Strip, and continued construction of an extensive separation barrier in the West Bank. Israel did not destroy any homes of suicide bombers or their families in 2005, but is re-considering the tactic in light of the December 5 suicide bombing in Netanya. Israeli counterterrorism measures appear to have reduced the frequency and lethality of attacks. Continuing attacks and credible threats of attacks, however, show that the terrorist groups remain committed to attacking Israeli targets.

1B. In response to terrorist attacks perpetrated after Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the IDF deployed forces along the perimeter of the Gaza Strip to prevent rocket and mortar attacks, delayed the expected transfer of West Bank towns to PA control, postponed planned meetings with Palestinian negotiators, used aircraft to set off sonic booms over Gaza, and launched rockets and artillery fire into Qassam and mortar launch areas in Gaza.

1C. Israeli security forces and customs authorities seized containers at the port of Ashdod that contained thousands of dollars worth of merchandise suspected of having been purchased by PIJ for resale. GOI sources report that they saw an upsurge in PIJ's purchase and resale of goods in 2005, and that PIJ is using the funds raised to establish its military and civilian infrastructure in Palestinian areas. IDF and Civil Administration forces also shut down two illegal "Daawa" charity organizations in the West Bank to prevent their possible use as conduits for terror finance.

TERRORIST GROUPS

17. ACTIVITIES OF TERRORIST GROUPS IN 2005:

1A. Palestinian terrorist groups operating from the West Bank, and Gaza continue to focus their attention on the Palestinians' historical conflict with Israel, attacking Israel and Israeli interests within Israel and the Palestinian territories, rather than engaging in operations worldwide. Palestinian terrorist groups conducted a significant number of attacks in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip in 2005. PIJ, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, HAMAS, and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) were responsible for most of the attacks, which included suicide bombings, shootings, and mortar and rocket firings against civilian and military targets. Within the Gaza Strip, Palestinian militants engaged in occasional skirmishes with PA police and security service officials, and periodically shot at polling stations, electoral offices, and PA security complexes. Terrorist attacks in 2005 killed almost 50 people, a decrease from the almost 100 people killed in 2004.

1B. According to claims by HAMAS, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and the PRC, a number of terrorist attacks in 2005 were perpetrated by one or more organizations acting together, including the January 13 truck bombing of the Qarni cargo crossing terminal on the Israel-Gaza border, which killed six Israeli civilians and wounded another five. An al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade member detained by the IDF in October claimed Lebanese Hizballah was operating him through a handler in the Gaza Strip.

1C. The PIJ claimed credit for the major terrorist attacks that occurred in Israel in 2005, including:

-- the February 25 bombing of a Tel Aviv nightclub that killed five Israeli civilians and injured another 55;
-- a July suicide bombing near a mall in Netanya that killed five civilians;
-- the October 26 suicide bombing in a market in Hadera, which killed six Israelis and wounded 55; and
-- the December 5 suicide bombing at a shopping mall in Netanya, which killed five Israelis and wounded over 50.

While the PIJ joined the Tahdiya, it has not upheld it, publicly justifying these attacks as exceptional responses to Israeli provocations (e.g., IDF arrests and targeted killings executed with the aim of preventing terror attacks.) In 2005, PIJ operatives continued to attempt to manufacture and launch projectile weapons; carried out armed attacks against Jewish settlers and IDF forces; planned to abduct and murder Israeli civilians; gathered weapons and explosive materials for use in bombs; collected intelligence information on

potential targets; and dug tunnels under Israeli-occupied areas for bomb detonation operations.

1D. HAMAS activity dropped significantly in 2005, in part because of its adherence to the Tahdiya, but also because much of its leadership in the West Bank has been arrested or killed. HAMAS claimed credit for the pre-Tahdiya, January 18 suicide bombing in Gaza that killed an Israeli security officer and injured 8 other soldiers and security agents. Individuals linked to HAMAS were involved in the September 21 kidnapping and murder in the West Bank of an Israeli resident of Jerusalem. Like PIJ, HAMAS justified "exceptional" attacks it perpetrated after agreeing to the Tahdiya as responses to Israeli "crimes" against Palestinian civilians and "holy warriors." Although HAMAS has indicated that it will not renew the Tahdiya when it expires at the end of 2005, it is likely to tacitly observe the cease-fire at least until after January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections. HAMAS declared its intent to run candidates in the elections. In response, GOI officials have publicly declared that Israel will neither interfere in, nor facilitate, the elections with the Palestinians. From September through mid-December, the IDF arrested hundreds of Palestinian activists, some of whom were members of HAMAS's political wing.

1E. Fatah's militant wing, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, claimed credit for the following terrorist attacks in 2005, even after agreeing to the Tahdiya:

-- the October 16 drive-by shooting attack at the Gush Etzion junction south of Jerusalem, in which two Israeli civilians were killed and three wounded; and a shooting attack on the same day in the West Bank, in which an Israeli teenager was wounded; and

-- several Qassam rocket launches from the Gaza Strip into the western Negev desert that destroyed property and injured Israeli civilians and soldiers.

1F. The PRC carried out a substantial number of terrorist attacks in late 2005 from the Rafah area on the Gaza-Egypt border, notably rocket attacks on Israel. The PRC was also responsible for armed attacks against construction teams and IDF forces in Gaza during disengagement.

1G. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) made no claims to perpetrating any terror attacks in 2005. It continued to coordinate with other FTOs to carry out attacks.

1H. Lebanese Hizballah continued to provide material support to Palestinian terrorist groups to augment their capacity and lethality in conducting attacks against Israel. Hizballah continued to fund and provide logistical support to PIJ cells in the West Bank. IDF sources claim Hizballah set up an advanced post in Gaza to serve as a liaison between Hizballah handlers in Lebanon and operatives in the Occupied Territories. and transfer funds and directives for carrying out terrorist attacks. Hizballah continued to call for the destruction of Israel and use Lebanese territory as a staging ground for terrorist operations. On November 21, Hizballah fighters -- covered by a rocket barrage against border communities and IDF outposts -- crossed into Israel in an effort to kidnap Israelis. The IDF stopped the incursion, killing four Hizballah fighters and hitting Hizballah targets in Lebanon with combat aircraft and artillery.

1I. On August 4, an AWOL Israeli soldier opened fire on a bus and killed four Israeli-Arabs and injured 10. During the attack, he was killed by the angry crowd. Prime Minister Sharon publicly condemned the shooting as an act of terrorism.

FOREIGN GOVERNMENT COOPERATION

17. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOI IS COOPERATING IN APPREHENDING, CONVICTING, AND PUNISHING INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR TERRORIST ACTS AGAINST U.S. CITIZENS SINCE 2000: The GOI aggressively pursues through legal and military action the perpetrators of terrorist attacks which occur in Israel. With a few notable exceptions, terrorist attacks in Israel have not been actively directed against Americans. The GOI has not sanctioned independent FBI investigations or cooperative U.S.-Israeli investigations of terrorist attacks inside Israel, but allows the FBI to monitor Israeli and PA investigations into attacks involving Americans in accordance with the U.S.-Israeli Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. Some terrorist suspects who are subjects of FBI cases have been convicted and sentenced in Israel. Several others have died in suicide bombings or as a result of other incidents subsequent to terrorist attacks that involved Americans.

18. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOI IS COOPERATING TO PREVENT FURTHER ACTS OF TERRORISM AGAINST U.S. CITIZENS IN THE

COUNTRY: GOI security and law enforcement services work closely with the USG to prevent acts of terrorism against U.S. citizens by sharing possible terrorist threat information and protecting USG properties in Israel. This is done while services like the Israeli National Police face manpower shortages, and have to deal with threats to the Israeli population from Palestinian terrorist organizations, Israelis determined to upset the peace process, and organized crime.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

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